



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**  
**The Deputy Under Secretary for**  
**Oceans and Atmosphere**  
Washington, D.C. 20230

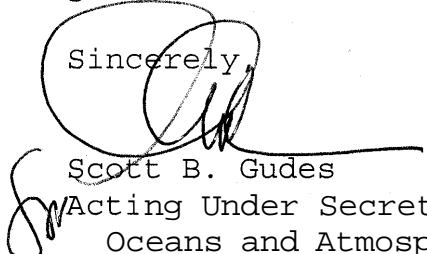
August 20, 2001

Dear Reviewer:

In accordance with provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), we enclose for your review the draft Programmatic Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS), August 2001, for Steller Sea Lion Protection Measures Under the Authority of the Fishery Management Plans for Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska and the Groundfish Fishery of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Area. The primary purpose of the proposed action is to modify the BSAI and GOA pollock, Pacific cod and Atka mackerel fisheries such that the reconfigured fisheries do not jeopardize the continued existence of Steller sea lions or adversely modify their critical habitat. If more than one alternative accomplishes the primary purpose of this action, a secondary objective is to modify the fisheries such that the reconfiguration minimizes the economic and social costs that will be imposed on the commercial fishing industry and associated coastal communities. The NMFS determined that an environmental impact statement (EIS) was the appropriate NEPA analysis document for the proposed federal action being considered. The determination was based both on the fact that significant impacts will result from implementation of the action and that the action is controversial. This analysis is a supplemental EIS (SEIS) because EISs were prepared for prior actions under the subject FMPs. This action revises prior actions, thus this SEIS is supplemental to prior EISs.

Any written comments or questions you have should be submitted to the Responsible Official, James W. Balsiger, Alaska Regional Administrator, NMFS, P.O. Box 21668, Juneau, Alaska 99802 by October 15, 2001. Also, one copy of your comments should be sent to the Office of Policy and Strategic Planning in Room 5805, SP, U.S. Department of Commerce, Washington, D.C. 20230.

Sincerely,

  
Scott B. Gudes

Acting Under Secretary for  
Oceans and Atmosphere/  
Administrator and Deputy  
Under Secretary

Enclosure

